TL 5892

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Donaciano Gomes. I am 21 years old and I am a student. I left East Timor on the 6th of September of 1990. I will briefly describe some of own personal experiences. I hope that these experiences do not represent what will exist in the future for East Timor.

I was 6 years old when East Timor was invaded by the Indonesian Armed Forces on the 7th of December 1975. I was in Dili with my family. There was a football field near our house which served as an assmebly point for Indonesian troops: Both paratroopers landing in Dili and infantry disembarking from warships. Those Timorese who passed near this area, mainly women and children going to seek refuge at the Motael church, were killed by the Indonesians. We did not leave our house for 15 days.

When I could go out, I came upon bodies in the streets, at times eaten by animals. On the beach nearest to us, a number of bodies were washed up. I helped a Timorese nurse bury many of the bodies at the beach.

In 1983-84, when I was 14 years old, I became involved in the conflict, because I could no longer tolerate the barbarous action of the Indonesian armed forces, who were massacring people every day, imprisoning people without justice and violating women as they pleased. What meaning do these actions have? For me growing up was terribly tragic.

It was in 1983-84 that I met someone who had become a member of the guerilla resistance while living in a village. He was later captured by Indonesian forces, tortured, and then sent to Atauro island. He was dead after a year of detention.

Naturally, I was influenced by such events. Who would not be? In the history of this century, others in Southeast Asia have also been influenced by terrible repression: for example, many in the Indonesian independence movement that struggled for so long to liberate their nation from Dutch colonialism.

In May 1989 we learned that Pope John Paul II would visit East Timor that October. The same month, I wanted to meet the commander-in-chief of the resistance, Xanana Gusmao to plan a demonstration. But the military campaigns against the resistance were largescale and it was impossible to meet him. Only through a message did he approve our plan to carry out a demonstration after mass was celebrated by Pope John Paul II.

To intimidate the population in preparation for the visit of Pope John Paul II to East Timor, numerous Timorese were

imprisoned and tortured. Lt. Colonel Prabowo, President Suharto's son-in-law, personally tortured Idelfonso Araujo, breaking his leg and his teeth.

The climate of terror did not impede a demonstration from taking place at the end of the mass celebrated by the Pope on October 12, 1989.

Immediately after the Pope had left, the repression came down upon us. There were numerous imprisonments: two of my friends, Jacob Xavier and Virgilio Costa, were detained at Senopati III, a commando barracks, and were tortured. I escaped this fate by hiding for some nights in the woods near Dili. But knowing that the military had threatened to take my family hostage, I sought refuge in the Catholic Bishop's residence on 26 October.

There were about 38 young people there already. The head of the Indonesian secret service and others tried to make us leave the bishop's residence but the bishop, Mgr. Belo, took responsibility for our protection.

Days later, after the tension built up following demonstrations in support of us, the Indonesian military commander and officers entered the bishop's house and threatened to take away the bishop if we did not come out of our own accord. We came out, after the commander had promised us in front of the bishop that we would not be tortured and that after a short interrogation we would be set free. We were taken by bus to the police station and the bishop came with us.

During the interrogations the police were replaced by Red Beret commandos. Afterwards the majority of my companions were indeed released as promised. But despite the promises made by the military to Mgr. Belo, several others and I were taken to four different military installations. In each of these locations we were tortured: serious burns from cigarettes, electric shocks, a dagger stuck in my back, blows to the head, gun muzzles pointed at my chest, head and in my mouth. Our tormentors wanted us to accuse a Timorese priest of having instigated the demonstrations during the Pope's visit. The interrogation and torture lasted 15 days.

On February 6, 1990, I was set free. On the eve of my departure for Portugal, on September 4, 1990, there was another demonstration in favor of self-determination and independence. The Indonesians responded in the same manner, imprisoning and torturing hundreds of people. A similar situation exists now, as the military tries to prevent manifestations of popular feeling during the expected Portuguese Parliamentary visit. There is also a major military campaign to capture the Mr. Xanana Gusmao before this visit.

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That which I have seen and experienced is what all our people have been experiencing and enduring for 15 years, as prisoners in our own land. The way to peace is through genuine dialogue. Otherwise, this tragic situation will continue indefinitely. The Indonesian military and the Indonesian people should remember their own struggle against Dutch colonialism. They should remember that we have the same rights as they did.

Thank you for your attention.